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## **Book Review: Lightening Warfare: Forrest's First West Tennessee Campaign December 1862**

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Lonnie E. Maness. *Lightning Warfare: Forrest's First West Tennessee Campaign December 1862*. Jackson, TN: Main Street Publishing, 2007. ISBN 978-0-9791154-7-9.

For over 30 years Dr. Lonnie Maness, now University of Tennessee at Martin Professor Emeritus of History, has researched and written more about General Nathan Bedford Forrest than any other historical topic. Besides many articles about Forrest's career, this volume is Maness' second book about "The Wizard of the Saddle." Throughout the professor's writings he has emphasized that the Civil War figure was an untutored military genius who acted basically on observation and instinct, for he had not been taught principles of warfare. Maness compares Forrest's abilities quite favorable with other major and better-known American generals on both sides of the 1860s conflict. He argues this cavalry officer could have made major differences in the war's overall outcome if his counsel and abilities had been followed and utilized numerous times. Naturally Maness presents his main thesis about Forrest's overall career in the book's Introduction. At the same time he specifies Forrest's military tactical setbacks at Parker's Crossroads,

Tennessee, as December 1862 ended and lesser so at Paducah, KY, in March 1864. The most obvious defeat for Forrest was at Selma Alabama in April 1865.

Next Maness examined Forrest's early family history and background long before the Fort Donelson campaign of early 1862. Certainly the youngster's mother helped shaped her son by example and actions in part due to early widowhood. He obviously developed into a strong willed and determined youth. He early learned the value of bold and surprising actions whether in personal conflicts or winning the hand of Mary Ann Montgomery. As Forrest became more prosperous, the north Mississippi planter and later Memphis resident acquired slaves and even became a slave trader. Maness gives him extremely high marks for his exemplary relationship to and treatment of those slaves and their families before the war and during battle situations.

Naturally Maness follows Forrest military career beginning in mid-1861 when he entered the war as a private in Tennessee forces and early recruited mounted rangers for the Confederate States of America, the latter service quickly resulting in the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Orders

resulted in Forrest being active in southern Kentucky and shortly to Fort Donelson. According to Maness, Forrest displayed resourcefulness, energy, and natural understanding of military moves, both traditional and unorthodox. Those traits won the support and admiration of his men. He would have fought the Fort Donelson battle differently to hold this important barrier to Union entry into Middle and West Tennessee. Rather than surrender, at least Forrest proved his men could successfully evacuate the site.

Then in "Advance and Retreat" Maness examines how poorly the war was going west of the Appalachians during 1862 in contrast to comparative Confederate success east of that chain. The 400-mile Confederate line of defense in the west had been breached as seen at Fort Donelson. As a result, C.S.A. forces shortly had to defend approaches to Corinth, Mississippi, such as Shiloh. Forrest believed defeat at Shiloh and Corinth could have been averted by more vigorous use of Confederate forces in those engagements. Thereafter, Maness largely sketches Forrest's 1862 movements and recruiting related to Kentucky and Middle and East Tennessee preparatory to [prior to] entry into West Tennessee to diminish Union

progress west of the Tennessee River and toward Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Military circumstances in West Tennessee presented major challenges to Forrest. Maness explains those in detail and how the general demonstrated his resourcefulness and abilities during wintry weather while capturing supplies, recruiting and training his troops, and while skillfully evading Union forces. Not surprisingly, Maness shows Forrest excelling with ploys and psychological warfare. In some respects the Confederate general even made a believer of the Union's Colonel Robert Ingersoll. Forrest definitely was mobile and speedy as he traveled quickly from Lexington westward to Jackson and northward along the Mobile and Ohio Railroad through Trenton, Rutherford, Union City, and briefly to Moscow, Kentucky. Then he headed somewhat eastward to Dresden and southward through Clarksburg to Lexington and back across the Tennessee River.

Forrest's late December exit of West Tennessee was temporarily delayed by the battle of Parker's Crossroads. Maness devotes a complete chapter to this clash that was the biggest of the Civil War in Henderson County, Tennessee. Forrest knew Union troops were especially

pressuring him. Immediate departure from West Tennessee was dangerous, but defeating U.S.A. units would lower Union morale and could diminish Grant's advance toward Vicksburg. According to Maness, Forrest had a good plan for knocking off one Union unit before engaging the second. Unfortunately though a subordinate's misinterpreting orders opened a direct route for Union soldiers. Upon the latter's arrival the surprised and boxed in Forrest quickly withdrew beyond the Tennessee River and ending his first West Tennessee campaign.

Maness has included several additional features in his book. Frequently his footnotes give helpful biographical sketches of persons mentioned in the general narrative. He has gathered numerous pictures of officers in the battles and several campaign maps. He added appendices listing units and commanders at Parker's Crossroads, a Confederate Veteran Magazine article about Forrest's military approaches, British Lord Garnet J. Wolseley's noted evaluation of Forrest as a man and soldier, an item called "Forrest at Shiloh," and a time-line of Forrest's life.

Review by Dr. Marvin Downing, University of Tennessee at Martin